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TAGS: PINR PGOV PREL BF
SUBJECT: BAHAMAS: 2009 SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS (C-AL9-00153)

REF: A. SECSTATE 20677
B. NASSAU 149

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Timothy Zuniga-Brown for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (S/NF) SUMMARY: GCOB officials will voice their opposition to the proposed Anti-Tax Haven Act at the 2009 Summit of the Americas (SOA). During a meeting on March 13, MFA Permanent Secretary Patricia Rogers told the Charge that the GCOB plans to raise the issue, noting that The Bahamas has made considerable effort since 2001 to be more transparent and cooperative with U.S. agencies. The GCOB has no plans to raise the economic embargo of Cuba but would not be surprised if others in the region did. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (S/NF) The following input is keyed to ref A, paragraph 1.A:

-- 1. The GCOB has not finalized plans for the SOA. Prime Minister Ingraham will attend a meeting with other CARICOM members in the coming weeks to discuss priorities. A major theme for The Bahamas is the current economic situation and specifically the effect of the proposed &Stop Tax Haven Abuse Act& on the Bahamian banking industry (ref B). Already reeling from a drop in tourist travel, The Bahamas is fearful that their other major industry, the banking sector, will be crippled by the passage in the U.S. and Europe of similar laws aimed at off-shore banks. Rogers told the Charge that The Bahamas has been proactive in responding to requests by the U.S. following 9/11 for more transparency and cooperation. The GCOB plans to lobby against the bill at the Summit and on the margins.

-- 2. Rogers said that she did not have any indications that any governments would use the Summit to criticize U.S. policy, upstage the U.S. president or engage him in public debate. She would not be surprised, however, if some took advantage of the summit to raise the issue of the economic embargo of Cuba.

-- 3. Rogers opined that countries in the region may have used the December Brazil Summit, to which the U.S. and Canada were not invited, to trial balloon issues in advance of the SOA. However, she believed that the atmosphere at the SOA would be more constructive and positive in part because the countries know it is their first time to engage with the new administration.

-- 4. Rogers said that if others tried to circumvent the SOA with controversial agenda items The Bahamas would speak out for restraint. She felt that other like-minded Caribbean countries such as Jamaica, Dominican Republic and Barbados would do likewise.

-- 5. Rogers had no knowledge of any other governments planning to use the summit process as a mechanism to advance reforms that could jeopardize the independence and autonomy of the Inter-American Human Rights System.

